

Dr Saroj K. Padhi and Romantic Poets are Analogous with a Special Focus on Monsoon Memories

Dr Dalip Khetarpal

A former professor, poet, critic, reviewer, editor, and philosopher.

Abstract

In this paper, Dr Dalip Khetarpal explores Dr Saroj Padhi's poetic capability. The themes of Saroj's poems are kaleidoscopic in nature. Even a cursory reading of an anthology reveals how deftly he has interwoven nature, humanism, philosophy, mysticism, metaphysicism, psychology, love and many more subjects with the magical thread of his mighty imagination. However, nature forms an inevitable part of whatever theme he has chosen and his poems, purely on nature, have no parallel.

Keywords: Saroj K Padhi's poetry, mysticism, metaphysicism, Indian poetry in English, Indian English literature

Dr Saroj K. Padhi and Romantic Poets are Analogous with a Special Focus on Monsoon Memories

Though teaching is Dr Saroj Padhi's forte, he seems to be more comfortable and better at writing poetry—being a great creative genius. Even while working as a professor, he got a large number of poems published in most of the outstanding magazines and journals, nationally and internationally, both. He has quite unconsciously taken a large slice of the credit for publishing two books of criticism, 12 research articles and ten anthologies of poems. Designated as Ambassador of Peace by World Institute of Peace in 2016, he also received Rock Pebbles National Literary Award and International Enchanting Muse Award last year. His glittering literary career has earned him fame and honour both in India and abroad.

The themes of Saroj's poems are kaleidoscopic in nature. Even a cursory reading of an anthology reveals how deftly he has interwoven nature, humanism, philosophy, mysticism, metaphysicism, psychology, love and many more subjects with the magical thread of his mighty imagination. However, nature forms an inevitable part of whatever theme he has chosen and his poems, purely on nature, have no parallel.

Many poets, especially, the romantics for whom nature is one of the prerequisites for writing poetry have long been propelled to tune their lyrics to the powerful variations of the beauties of various objects in nature—landscape,

rivers, mountains, myriad flowers, fruits, birds, animals, crags, diurnal and seasonal changes of season and the protean natural phenomena around them. Saroj is also strongly aware that the power, sheer beauty, changes and influences of nature have always fascinated mankind from time immemorial. He often witnesses how the overwhelming waves that surge in the ocean, make one pale into nothingness by comparison. Mighty trees in a vast and dense forest evoke feelings of smallness and awe. The devotion, the way female animals look after their young, put us to shame by reminding us of the cruelty with which humans treat one another. The truth, according to the poet is, nature, despite its awe-inspiring beauty, demeanour and wonder, has an infinite treasure that this human world is deprived of, that it can also neither see, feel, nor imagine. But Saroj, a great poet of nature, is blessed with a keen perception and lively sense to see and feel all these vividly and feelingly. His poetry celebrates the beauty, silence, love and the spirit of the natural world. He uses natural imagery to convey universal truths with great mastery. One finds references to mountains, hills, rivers, seas, flowers, flora and fauna and various effects of seasonal changes affecting both nature and man not only in the current anthology but also in other anthologies. He deems intense emotion not only as a true source of aesthetic experience but also as a means to comprehend the sublimity and beauty of nature in all its forms.

Theocritus, the Greek poet, wrote idylls in the third century B.C.E. to glorify and honor the beauty of nature and simplicity of rural life, inspiring many such future poems including the well-known poem, "Lycidas" by John Milton. The more intimate form of pastoral poetry is the eclogue, a poem attuned to the beauties of the natural world and seasons, conceived in a beautiful, pleasant, serene, and rural place, and in which shepherds frequently converse. Sir Philip Sidney wrote 'Arcadia' and Edmund Spenser's 'The Shepherd's Calendar' based the months of the year to identify the changes in a shepherd's life. In 'January,' he compares the shepherd's unrequited love to 'the frosty ground,' 'the frozen trees' and 'his own winter-beaten flocks.' In 'April' he says 'Like April showers, so streams the trickling tears. 'Saroj also reveals his vivid memories of the various effects of the season in 'Monsoon Memories'. In 'Autumn Fever' (p. 42), he explicates how the disappearance of heartless monsoon leaves the parched earth starved:

*'A depraved Monsoon signs off stealthily
Leaving behind a half-starved earth
That looks up
For a few more drops from a blank sky.'*

The joyous effects of spring on various objects of nature have been portrayed in 'Spring Revelry' (p. 90) through personification:

*Spring is here in half-wakeful hours of dreaming
flowers*

*When seeds gently swell in the ovaries, eager to
assume name;*

*In happy swings of bursting buds filled with wild
desires*

*When tender Sun swims in dense fog without fire in
its flame;*

How even warm winter afternoon affects nature is picturesquely and sensuously depicted with Keatsian beauty in 'That Afternoon' (p. 93). The pictorial description of the following lines strongly arrests one's attention:

*That glorious winter afternoon
that held us like two entwined leaves on a twig
swaying, shivering at caresses of an amorous wind,
when lightly
hopping birds chirped around
in their boiling desire to reach a crescendo...*

*the oriole in you took dips in an unseen river of
desire
before basking in the crimson western glow
marigolds in the backyard oozed the last aroma*

in you I smelt the sea and you smelt the river in me.

As the poet perceives, 'Unreachable' (p.101) unfolds mirth and merriment in nature even during the cold month of December:

...who can take me

*...to the balmy shade of those deep lying roots
Where aroma emanates from tryst with earth,
As saplings shiver this cold December morning
Soon after their nascent, joyful birth,
And seeds burst with joy of germinating
...He enchants us with magic of a flute
That drips like honeyed dew from lips of blossoms...*

Endowed with a positive vision of life, even fierce winds and rains that often cause havoc are viewed most favorably by the poet, providing as it were, a reminder and silhouette to his 'illusion of being with' his beloved. Thus, in 'Wind and Rain' (p. 105) the poet says:

*Wind and rain have been playing it all, over the
years
Creating, recreating, keeping the image and sound
alive
The illusion of being with her thro' all smiles and
tears...*

Winter is often depicted by most English poets as an unpleasant and fierce season wherein the entire nature is cheerless and covered with a thick blanket of ice and snow, making the entire atmosphere cheerless and lifeless. As Keats described, 'The sedge has withered from the lake/and no birds sing/so haggard and woe-be-gone?' (La Belle Dame Sans Merci). But even in the coldest weather, Wordsworth had always enjoyed with his friends outside instead of remaining inside the house. He once

affirmed: 'though the weather is awful, life goes on'. Further, 'Ways be foul, then nightly sings the staring owl'. Saroj also delineates winter favorably in various hues sans any element of discomfort or cruelty. Paradoxically titled, 'Winter on Fire' (p. 106) is one such poems which also has an undertone of humanism, irony and satire:

*Winter creeps into my sleeves
Like a pickpocket's stealthy hand
Groping the dark insides
Of my insipid skin
To steal moments of warmth
...but to return as a colder wind to the poor hamlets
To douse the wrath of farmers
Who burn acres of drought-hit crops in protest
Against apathy of the officers;*

'Winter Romance' (p. 107) also delineates winter admiringly with all Keatsean sensuousness and pictorial beauty:

*As a layer of mist hangs over sulking sands
Creating an illusion of water
In the dry river...
...drops of dew sit on flowers in mild flutter
Whispering each to each about dregs of Winter,
The breeze hijacks you on a bumpy ride
To the hill top where dark kisses lips of dawn*

Under shadow of towering rocks

That glisten under a sickle Moon's dying glimmer...

The poet's sensitivity to nature, his mental and emotional involvement in its fate and his innate temperament to feel its pangs and agonies caused by winds and rains are all aesthetically and metaphorically portrayed in 'Wounded Alasi' (p. 109):

Caught in wind and rain, in throes of pain,

The terror-stricken Alasies hang from stem

Like faded dreams, from broken boughs...

River Muran sings of a dying faith

Of folks rotting in dread of suspicious Naxals

Who prowl like blood hungry pachyderms

In the thinning jungles of Ambaguda

Over which a tremulous Moon loiters

Like an orphan in a starless sky,

In search of her long dead parents

Whose shadows lull the tired lilies

To sleep on muddy ripples that sigh

In the bosom of a night

On draughts of Salap quite high!

Wordsworth and other nature poets speak about sweet old memories that they cherished and that connect them with the environment. Love for nature is one of the

keynotes of P B Shelley's poetry. His poetry abounds in Nature imagery. The way he resorts to nature is symbolic, e.g. he uses the West Wind to symbolise the power and effects of nature on the imagination of man. The poem also shows a link between the inner and outer world of the poet. Saroj banks on nature to describe various vital aspects of life, like society, humanism, man's inner thoughts, philosophy, etc. His poetry at times conveys deep metaphysical meaning. Nature is picturesquely and oft-times sensuously delineated in a more mystic and sacred manner in his works. 'December' (p. 41) has a unique myriad blend of nature, season, pictorial beauty, sensuousness, ecstasy, grimmer, darker and violent facets of life:

*December is the sweetest month
blending Winter with the heat of desire,
culling choicest memories to light
as dead leaves are flung into camp fire---
around which frenzied youths dance
as into blazes of body,
their secret affair
does loudly transpire---
forgetful of deaths
caused by pounding pachyderms
or by wary, blood thirsty Naxals
with their landmine and gunfire;*

Explicitly, the poet has displayed astonishing feats of his poetic art and intelligence while composing these lines.

The poet is even attracted by autumn, an unpleasant season, and wants 'to enjoy the ecstasy of its 'fever' after a 'depraved Monsoon signs off stealthily'. The image of sacred Moon that recurs in many poems like 'Crescent Moon', 'Culprit Moon', 'Seize the night', 'Elusive Moon', 'Kash Flowers and the Moon', 'Monsoon Memories-iii', 'Youth' and many more that has been used to symbolise various feelings and ideas, has been used in this poem also to betoken the basis of peace and comfort:

O how much I long to catch a fever

As the wintry wind knocks my door

With promise of rest under a warm cover;

This full moon night

As maidens worship the moon

Leave me alone

To enjoy the ecstasy of Autumn shiver

It appears that deeply blended with nature, the poet becomes nature itself. Like Tennyson, Saroj's poems also clearly signal the importance and benefits of the individual-nature relationship. Tennyson resorts to various references of nature to describe philosophical themes because he had an immense interest in reforming the society and so he tried to express his desires through his poetry. Though set in nature, Saroj's poems also at times, focus on vital social-moral and philosophical issues.

Like Romantic poets, he also gives priority and superiority to imagination over the speculative and logical reason without opposing or belittling the restricted values and importance of the latter in human life. He appreciates the view that the realms of experience are so complex and deep that they cannot be explored and understood by finite human reason. It is sheer imagination which can reveal fleeting flashes of deep and penetrating insight into the core of reality. Wordsworth, who attaches great importance and power to imagination establishes very perceptively:

*Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And reason in her most exalted mood."*
(Prelude, Book IV)

The poet knows well that while reason divides and disconnects things, imagination binds and unifies them together. No dichotomy is maintained between matter and spirit, microcosm (man) and macrocosm (universe), between sentient living beings and inanimate objects. There is an inextricable bond of all-embracing solidarity, unity and fellowship among all diversities. More distinctive features of the Romantic imagination that one also witnesses in Saroj's poetry are the elements of awe, wonder, ecstasy, rapture and reverence aroused in the reader's mind when it ponders and communes with nature or with the universe. Such an intense experience is

vital to Saroj as it is vital to Romantic poets. Hence, like Romantic poetry, Saroj's poems are also the product of sentiments, emotions and imagination as opposed to the objectivity of neoclassical poetry that avoids expressing personal feelings and emotions.

As is obvious in romantic poetry, love, the most universal element, is also depicted by the poet in various forms and nuances as exemplified by 'Pensive lover', 'The Pensive Poet', 'Touch', 'Search' and few more. However, the poet is not completely swayed by love as his strong sense of reason has put a check on wild emotions and sentiments. His wisdom and sense of reason enables him to visualise the clarity of vision that reason brings, as Wordsworth observed: '...with every new dusk and dawn,/not to hug of blind faith/with promise of speedy redemption/and to the stream of reason/for clear view my true reflection'.

Wordsworth, despite being a poet of nature, was also a poet of man. His poems are replete with love for human beings. His poetic vision in fact, is inconceivable without man. Mark his exalted portrayal of man: 'This was man/Ennobled outwardly before my sight/And thus my heart was early introduced/To an unconscious love and reverence/Of human nature'. Likewise, Saroj's philosophy and humanitarian outlook are displayed very spontaneously in poem after poem. 'River out of Harmony', metaphorically titled, (p. 82) is a satirical poem that elucidates most pathetically and feelingly how love

has disappeared from the current scenario and how it has been ruthlessly replaced by hatred and vice in this age:

*The river of Love is drying up
in our embattled, endangered swim upstream
when metals are more precious than mortals
and chaffs, more glamorous than the cream;
virtue sits in some dark corner
as roots of vice strike the center;
sands raise storms of disquiet and disgust
in absence of hearts' clear streams
that once fed the river
now are caught in heat of fake daydreams;*

The poet, with his humane philosophy, is deeply concerned with the suffering humanity as is illustrated by 'Rain Ruined' (p. 77) which is a pathetic poem, explicating an account of helpless victims who have to face tragic death because their weak roofless huts made of mud have collapsed due to heavy rains. While 'a few died under the debris of houses that fell' and 'their kin languish/not knowing how and where to have the funeral;/ water snakes terrorize' them 'like foes at border...' In a pitiable and painful situation as such, Jagu, who after failing to find any means to take his expecting wife to a hospital, has to carry her 'in a bamboo stretcher' for 'an awful delivery'. It is because of the sense of profound humanity in the poet that he soulfully emphasizes with the miserable plight of the villagers.

'Morbid Mobile' (p. 63) is a purely humanitarian poem, depicting the current degenerative society with a sharp pang that only a humane sensitive poet can feel. Firstly, the poet hits out at those morbid mobile maniacs whose

mobiles have grown greedy

about capturing moments of torture and pain

either when accidents are bloody

or crimes odious go on against men or women.

*The poet's compassion, pity, sympathy combined
with anger against the evil doers are reflected in one
single go when he unfolds how*

Nirvayas are outraged in public by

Some voyeur-cells focus on the act of shame

Without any qualms to help the weak

At the hapless fight to lose in the bloody game;

It seems man has forsaken the poor conscience

To heartless dictates of this killer gift of science!

The lines are soul-wrenching and could make even a strong-hearted man shudder with fear to imagine the level of degradation man has fallen into during this period of great advancement of science and technology. 'Behind Durga Puja' (p. 43) also elucidates the shameful and disgraceful nature of modern man. The pain and anguish of the poet is expressed through such powerful and moving lines: 'Behind each syllable of fiesta and fanfare/of goddess's ceremonial worship...' and also behind the

blare of 'mikes and loudspeakers/voicing the glory of mother Durga' is hidden 'million cries of silent suffering/loss and injury muted by harsh times/of neighborhood girl who got repeatedly raped/by old celebrity tantric baba/inside the sanctorum of his shrines,/Where innocent flesh is burnt in the pyre of demonic lust;/animals are butchered at the pious guillotine/in the name of wish divine,/hungry human predators prowl behind the pandals/to pursue their fond crimes/though the Goddess's spear pierces/the chest of the mythic demon of olden times...' After witnessing such a wretched situation, Saroj's deep sense of humanity is aroused and he boldly and candidly debunks the evils ingrained in our very system movingly, ironically, satirically, boldly and honestly.

Many elements, like personification, lyricism, romanticism, metaphysicism, dreaminess and ethereal way of presenting strange experiences sometimes come into play together. In 'Moon Knocks at 3 am' (p. 62), the poet stretches his powerful imagination to the furthest extent when he ventures to say

*At three a.m. Moon knocked my heart's door
Like a wisp of cool wind flicking green leaves
Drunk with dew to the core;
Their nude, wet bodies basking under beams
With light flashing in each pore,
With her scarred heart embossed on her face*

And her mind, dripping scented darkness

But her words were so very few:

'Make me yours,

With you-I want to be you'.

Much feeling and emotion has been conveyed through this pictorial poem and mark how lyrical, expressive and meaningful are the lines! Thus, like English romantic poetry, Saroj's creations are also characterized by 'intense emotions coupled with an intense display of imagery'.

Saroj's versatility enables him to grasp and present certain vital tenets of psychology, thereby poeticizing psychology itself. 'Child inside' (p. 35) unfolds how a child that hibernates in the psyche of adults is manifested in many forms quite unconsciously. The universality of this idea has been recognized and accepted by all and sundry throughout the world. The poet keenly observes and presents this with rare metaphorical and metaphysical beauty:

A child sleeps inside us

Like a winter frog in hibernation;

A submerged instinct too deep

To swim up a clear passion!

A child's simplicity, playful nature, his curiosity and his cravings for simple love are some basic traits that are easily perceptible in every adult are all presented by the poet with rare aesthetic fervor.

Pantheism is a doctrine based on religious philosophy and is often used by various poets and writers. It believes that the Universe or Nature and God are perfectly identical. As such, pantheism denotes the idea that 'God' is best seen as an entity related to the whole Universe. Although there are divergent views on Pantheism, the central idea perceptible in almost all versions is that the Cosmos represents an 'all-encompassing unity and the divine spirit pervades the entire Nature. There's nothing to suggest that Saroj is a pantheist in the strictest sense of the term as he does not see any divine entity working within all objects of nature as we see a driving force or spirit in nature in the works of other pantheists like Vigil (70-19BC), Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), William Blake (1757-1827) William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892), Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and many more. Shelley also appears as a pantheist, because his treatment and attitude towards nature are analogous to that of Wordsworth who greatly influenced him. Like a Romanticist, Saroj in some way, evincing traces of pantheism, views nature as having life and form. He doesn't view nature as a mere vegetation, subject to the laws of science of growth and decay nor as a commonplace object to be portrayed or described but as something vibrant and capable of even feeling emotions.

To sum up, it is quite clear that Saroj is one of the few Indian poets who could skillfully blend both western and eastern poetic sensibilities. As various genres of poems and varied themes are reflected in many of his

anthologies, he can easily be acclaimed as the master of all poetry genres. His poems, which touch on metaphysical themes, express his ardent philosophy of life and mystic thoughts. They are not only pleasing and moving, but inspiring and elevating. He has doubtlessly shown excellent narrative and lyrical poetic skills in all his works. He has invented a style of poetry in which nature and the vibrant diction of the common man triumphed over formal, stylized, rigid and cold language. It is because of the said established multiple reasons that he has been internationally considered as the only modern poet who has the ability to revive almost all romantic trends and tendencies even in this modern era.

Works Cited

1. Padhi, Saroj K. Monsoon Memories and Other Poems.
2. Padhi, Saroj K. Petals in Prayer and Other Poems.
3. Padhi, Saroj K. Rhyming Ripples.
4. Padhi, Saroj K. Where Buds Refuse to Bloom and Other Poems.
5. Padhi, Saroj K. Elusive Spring.
6. Padhi, Saroj K. A Slice of Silence.
7. Padhi, Saroj K. Moon Moments.
8. Padhi, Saroj K. Silent Sight.
9. Padhi, Saroj K. Shattered I Sing.



Dr Dalip Khetarpal (Ph D) is a former professor, poet, critic, reviewer, editor, and philosopher.

Dr Dalip has worked in various capacities, as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and H.O.D (English) in various academic institutes in Haryana. He was a Dy. Registrar and Joint Director at the Directorate of Technical Education, Haryana, Chandigarh.

Get Your Book Reviewed

If you have got any book published and are looking for a book review, contact us. We provide book review writing service for a fee. We (1) write book review (2) publish review in CLRI (3) conduct an interview with the author (4) publish interview in CLRI. [Know more here](#).

Authors & Books

We publish book releases, Press Release about books and authors, book reviews, blurbs, author interviews, and any news related to authors and books for free. We welcomes authors, publishers, and literary agents to send their press releases. Visit our website <https://authornbook.com>.